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**REPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Final report on the implementation and impact of the second phase (2000-2006) of
the Community action programmes in the field of education (Socrates) and
vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) and the multiannual programme (2004-
2006) for the effective integration of information and communication technologies
(ICT) in education and training systems in Europe (eLearning)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Presentation of the report

This report was written to fulfil the requirements set out in the European Parliament and Council decisions establishing the Community action programmes in the field of education (Socrates 2000-2006)¹, vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci 2000-2006)² and integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in education and training systems in Europe (eLearning 2004-2006)³.

Together, these programmes received more than EUR 3 billion of Community funds. They complemented each other, contributed to creating the Europe of knowledge and gave the European Commission powerful tools to help to achieve the Lisbon goals on education and training⁴.

For the period 2007-2013 the various initiatives under these three programmes have been integrated under a single umbrella, the new Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)⁵. The decision to conduct a joint evaluation and to present this joint report follows the same line as this integration.

¹ Decision No 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 885/2004; Article 14(4) requires an *ex post* evaluation report.

² Council Decision 1999/382/EC, as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 885/2004; Article 13(5) requires a final report on implementation.

³ Decision No 2318/2003/EC; Article 12(2) requires an *ex post* evaluation report.

⁴ See, for example, the report from the Education Council on *The concrete future objectives of education and training systems*:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/rep_fut_obj_en.pdf.

⁵ Decision No 1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning.

This report is based on an external joint evaluation of the three programmes which included an analysis of national reports from the countries participating in them⁶.

1.2. Description of the programmes

1.2.1. Socrates

The Socrates programme, with a total budget of EUR 2,093 billion, had four specific objectives: to strengthen the European dimension in education, to promote knowledge of EU languages, to promote cooperation and mobility in the field of education and to encourage innovation in education.

The programme consisted of three main schemes – Comenius, Erasmus and Grundtvig covering schools, higher education and adult learning respectively. These were complemented by two more schemes – Lingua, promoting languages, and Minerva, promoting distance learning and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for pedagogical purposes. Joint action with related programmes was also envisaged.

1.2.2. Leonardo da Vinci

The Leonardo da Vinci programme had three main objectives: to improve skills, especially of young people in initial vocational training, to improve the quality of and access to continuous vocational training and lifelong acquisition of skills and qualifications and to promote and increase the contribution made by vocational training to the process of innovation with a view to improving competitiveness and entrepreneurship and creating new employment opportunities. The total budget for the Leonardo da Vinci programme was EUR 1,270 billion.

The programme included six areas of activity: mobility, pilot projects, language skills, transnational networks, reference material and accompanying measures. Joint action with related programmes was also envisaged.

1.2.3. eLearning

The eLearning programme aimed to supporting and further developing effective use of ICT in education and training. The objective was to contribute to high-quality education and to put the needs of the knowledge society into a lifelong learning context. The budget available for 2004-2006 was EUR 44 million, 45% of which was for twinning and networking schools via ICT (eTwinning). New organisational models were developed to create virtual campuses to add a virtual dimension to European cooperation between

⁶ Documents available at:
http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/evalreports/index_en.htm#postsoc2.

universities. Digital literacy was also promoted by encouraging new skills needed in an information-driven society.

2. KEY DATA ON PROJECTS AND PARTICIPANTS⁷

The programmes evaluated supported a variety of activities and did not all focus on the same aspects and target groups. Nonetheless, mobility schemes, cooperation projects between partners from different countries and the development of networks and tools were major outputs from nearly all the programmes.

Learning periods abroad featured in both the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes: 943 000 university students were involved in study mobility, 135 000 university teachers went to teach abroad and around 2 500 institutions were involved in Erasmus. More than 311 000 trainees and students and 56 000 trainers participated in more than 19 300 vocational training mobility projects. Mobility of staff and teachers was funded under both Comenius and Grundtvig (56 329 and 5 500 participants respectively).

Organisations cooperated in small partnership projects: over 74 000 grants were awarded to enable schools to participate in Comenius and 7 800 schools were involved in eTwinning. Another 20 000 grants enabled adult education institutions to cooperate in this area.

Multilateral projects and networks supported cooperation between a large number of partners from different Member States and other countries participating: 434 in Comenius and 455 in Grundtvig. Common curricula were developed in 520 projects under Erasmus and more than 2 000 Leonardo da Vinci pilot projects brought innovations to vocational training.

Lingua promoted 144 projects on language learning and development of tools to widen access to language courses and Minerva awarded 347 grants to support use of ICT in education.

3. IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMMES⁸

The evaluation demonstrated that these EU programmes were relevant to the needs of the sectors concerned and that many of the activities would not have taken place without their financial support.

⁷ See the annex for an overview of outcomes of the three programmes. The figures mentioned in this report and in the table have been updated in line with the latest statistics from the European Commission.

⁸ The figures provided in Section 3 are based on responses to surveys conducted during the external evaluation.

3.1. Impact on specific sectors

3.1.1. School education

The key schemes with an impact on schools were Comenius and eTwinning. Partnerships supported under the Comenius and eLearning programmes gave schools a more European dimension and outlook and improved the school climate, in terms of cooperation between teachers and pupils and between different subjects in the schools participating⁹. They helped to create a clearer sense of European identity by enabling schools to cooperate with schools in other EU countries. School partnerships enabled teachers to improve their teaching skills and gave pupils and teachers alike a chance to improve their foreign language and ICT skills, to experience European cooperation projects and to create sustainable links with their peers in other countries. Some 85% of the respondents who had participated in Comenius felt that their activity would not have taken place without funding from the Commission. Enhanced mobility within school education made the clearest impact out of the activities in the programme.

The direct impact on school curricula in general and on school policy and development of school education was more limited. However, at local level curricula and teaching methods improved. Projects, partnerships and individual mobility schemes influenced the educational practice of those directly involved. In particular, 64% of all beneficiaries reported increases in knowledge and skills and half saw sharing good practice across Europe as the main benefit. School authorities and administrators had the potential to add to the impact of the programme on school management. However, often they were unable to disseminate their results and experience to a wider audience and/or to the level of education policy.

3.1.2. Higher education¹⁰

The vast majority of higher education institutions participated in Erasmus, thereby enabling the scheme to stimulate the European dimension and innovation in higher education and make an impact at personal, institutional and policy levels.

The largest positive impact was by increasing the capacity for mobility. This influenced participants' personal and professional development and contributed to a more open attitude and a clearer and better informed perspective for their subsequent studies or professional life and to improving their understanding of

⁹ Report on the impact of the Comenius School Partnerships on the participant schools, published on: http://ec.europa.eu/education/doc/reports/index_en.html.

¹⁰ Information also based on the study "Impact of Erasmus on European higher education: quality, openness and internationalisation" by a consortium led by Cheps in partnership with INCHER – Kassel and Ecotec (2008).

Europe and of “belonging to a European family”. Knowledge of EU languages has improved and stronger contacts have been established with European colleagues. Participants in mobility schemes became more employable¹¹ thanks to their international experience and better language skills, as 89% of the respondents confirmed.

Erasmus has also had a considerable effect at national and international institutional levels. 94% of the participants in the survey agreed that Erasmus had increased and sustained cooperation between institutions. The effect on universities’ internationalisation strategies and development of international support services is significant, whereas the effect on teaching and research at departmental level seems more indirect, e.g. via the international networks created.

Erasmus has also acted as a driver for change in national and European higher education policies. It inspired five of the six lines of action in the Bologna Declaration¹² and provided support for the efforts to achieve the objectives set in the Bologna process. The Bologna process has led to convergence of course structures, while Erasmus has sought to provide the tools and support their deployment (e.g. the European Credit Transfer System), stimulate development of joint degrees and develop collaborative approaches to teaching.

Although the research activities of higher education institutions are not a main target area for Erasmus, the programme demonstrated positive effects on research. It contributed to an increase of higher education establishments' participation in joint international research projects, promoted networking between institutions and initiated increasing attendance and/or organisation of international conferences by academic staff.

3.1.3. *Adult education*

The strongest kinds of impact reported on adult learning were closer, sustained cooperation between institutions (93% of participating organisations), greater opportunities for mobility and a more European outlook on the part of individuals and institutions (90%). Grundtvig has thus clearly succeeded in sowing the seeds of a European dimension in adult education – a sector with almost no tradition of European cooperation hitherto and marked by a relatively weak institutional infrastructure, a high proportion of part-time and voluntary staff and strongly disparate profiles from one country to another.

The evaluation reported a significant impact in terms of improving the quality of teaching and curricula and approaches to learning and management (74%).

¹¹ “Increased employability” was also a finding in the “Study on the Professional Value of Erasmus Mobility” by the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel) and the University of Kassel, Germany (November 2006).

¹² See the study referred to in footnote 10.

Enhanced professional skills and stronger networking between adult education staff in Europe were further benefits, and more than half the respondents (56%) felt that their participation in Grundtvig had made them more employable and adaptable.

Finally, Grundtvig had a comparatively strong impact on improving educational opportunities for disadvantaged social groups: almost half the participants reported that their activities had made an impact in terms of targeting people with low skills or special needs and “hard to reach” groups.

3.1.4. *Vocational education and training (VET)*

The Leonardo da Vinci programme responded to the needs for vocational education and training, fostered further cooperation at Community level and helped to achieve convergence between Member States by clearly aligning its multiannual priorities with the policy objectives addressed in the Copenhagen process.

Significant socio-economic benefits have been achieved in relation to young people in VET. The projects contributed to improving their knowledge and their capacity for lifelong acquisition of skills. Improved foreign language skills were another major benefit for young people participating in the mobility part of the programme, making them more employable and adaptable to labour market developments.

The mobility schemes and pilot cooperation projects also considerably influenced the development of high-quality curricula and teaching methods in the institutions participating, as 63% of the respondents confirmed. By organising transnational cooperation and placements, the programme contributed to further opening up VET systems and, thereby, to greater transparency in curricula and qualifications.

The programme also made an impact on VET policy by developing standards, methods and tools that were integrated into national or regional policy and practice. The policy impact was strongest at local (71% of respondents) and regional (57%) levels, since many of the partners in projects are active at these levels. Effects were also seen at national policy level, but to a lesser degree (46%). Country-specific analyses showed that the impact was stronger in countries with underdeveloped VET systems, i.e. mainly the new participants.

Overall, the programme contributed to creating a European VET area which otherwise would not have developed at all or at best at a much slower pace. The most significant contribution made by the programme to the Lisbon goals was to improve the skills and, thus, labour market opportunities of young people.

3.1.5. *eLearning*

The eLearning programme was particularly effective at producing short-term results for organisations. More than 98% of the eLearning coordinators consulted considered that their project had made a positive impact on cooperation between institutions. Especially prominent institutional benefits included involvement in transnational cooperation, establishment of contacts and exchanges of good practice.

eLearning was also effective at producing significant results for staff and teachers. 75% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their project had made a positive impact on the quality of teaching, learning and curricula.

Overall, the eLearning programme contributed very positively to the objectives of Education and Training 2010. It performed especially well on developing skills for the knowledge economy and ensuring access to ICTs. Between 67% and 75% agreed or strongly agreed that their project had produced higher standards of digital literacy.

eTwinning was particularly effective at providing an innovative and interesting model offering schools free access to the eTwinning portal, a partner-finding service, support for school-level projects, pedagogical advice and good practice. This approach proved popular with the target audience and highly cost-effective. It exceeded stakeholders' and participants' expectations.

The eLearning activities have now been mainstreamed into the Lifelong Learning Programme, notably eTwinning in Comenius and virtual campuses in Erasmus.

3.2. **Common forms of impact of all three programmes**

3.2.1. *Creation of a European education area*

The creating of a "European education area" establishing a sustainable culture of European cooperation is acknowledged as the most significant impact. In particular, Erasmus has created infrastructure in which almost all European universities participate and the Leonardo da Vinci programme helped to establish a platform for transnational cooperation on VET. These programmes also contribute to the implementation of the "fifth freedom of knowledge".¹³

¹³ As requested by the European Council at its meeting on 13-14 March 2008. For more information see Presidency Conclusions, Council of the European Union, Brussels 7652/08, Rev. 1, 20 May 2008, point 8, available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/99410.pdf

3.2.2. *Improvements in teaching practice and management*

Improvements in teaching, learning and management were the second most common impact. Professionals have brought back their learning and applied it extensively alongside the significant contributions made by dissemination networks and the impact on management.

3.2.3. *Impact on individuals and society: socio-economic impact*

The programmes enhanced the “professional social capital”¹⁴, i.e. the existing resources and assets in a given framework, organisation or institution. This added value had significant effects on both individuals and organisations via mobility schemes, networks and partnerships. As a general rule, improvements were reported in individuals’ soft skills (such as communication skills, self-confidence, self-awareness and ability to work with others), language skills, cultural awareness and professional competence.

The main socio-economic impact took the form of mobility, which played an especially prominent part in Erasmus and Leonardo. Erasmus was instrumental in institutionalising mobility and embedding it firmly in university life. In Leonardo, mobility schemes were the most successful and cost-effective measures in the programme. Enabling mobility for school staff was also one of the clearest kinds of impact of Comenius. Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci grants, however, were not always sufficient to enable people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to participate. Grundtvig and the eLearning programme therefore had the strongest impact on tackling socio-economic disadvantage.

3.2.4. *Impact on policy and practice at EU and Member State levels*

Policy and practice were mainly influenced by the efforts of individual projects to disseminate results. The impact on policy was greatest at local level, although Leonardo and Erasmus also made a significant impact at national and European levels, in particular by supporting implementation of European tools such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credits in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

3.2.5. *Increased proficiency in EU languages*

The programmes made a widespread impact on language learning by developing and disseminating new methods and via participation in the project itself, although this tended to involve the more commonly used languages, especially English.

¹⁴ “Professional social capital” means the value derived from networks and networking activity by professionals (teachers and trainers) involved in the programmes.

3.2.6. *Contribution to objectives related to the Lisbon strategy*

Although the programmes were designed before the Lisbon strategy, they contributed to achieving its objectives, mainly by opening up education and training systems to the wider world and improving their quality and effectiveness.

3.2.7. *Tools for structural development*

In relation to the specific issues of convergence, transparency and recognition, the programmes supported development and implementation of tools that can enhance “structural” developments such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credits in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and Europass.

4. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME

The evaluators made a range of strategic recommendations to improve the support for education and training policy in the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). They also put forward operational proposals intended to improve the content and management of the LLP and assessment of its impact. The Commission will ensure that the recommendations are effectively addressed by means of an action plan. Regular progress reports will be made on implementation thereof. Nonetheless, some answers are already provided below.

4.1. Design and priorities

The evaluation pointed out that the Lifelong Learning Programme should capitalise as much as possible on the achievements during the previous period and recommended improvements in the sectoral parts of the programmes.

In the case of Erasmus, the quality of mobility should be increased, qualifications gained in learning experience abroad should be better recognised and business, enterprises and civil society should be more involved to link education and the labour market better.

Steps should be taken to ensure that the Leonardo da Vinci programme continues to give priority to the areas highlighted in the Copenhagen process, such as quality and attractiveness in VET combined with recognition and transparency.

The priority for school and adult learning should be to develop measures that make a stronger contribution to the Lisbon strategy and to achieving relevant benchmarks (reducing early school-leaving and increasing participation in lifelong learning).

The European Commission is already committed to stronger quality monitoring and recognition of mobility periods abroad and will continue to work closely with Member States on implementation of the ECTS and EQF.

The Commission will also continue to tighten the links between the programme and policy developments. Priority topics on which applicants are invited to submit proposals under the programme are defined in the yearly calls for proposals. These priorities are set in close cooperation with the national authorities in the countries participating.

4.2. Management and monitoring

Although some progress was made on developing information tools in each programme, it was very difficult to obtain robust, accurate and timely data on outputs and results of the previous programmes. Development of an integrated management information system to collect results systematically and monitor them better is highly recommended.

The European Commission has addressed this issue already by introducing “LLP Link”, a common management tool to be used by all LLP national agencies (NA). This system will allow collection of up-to-date, complete and consistent data produced in the course of the NAs’ daily management of the programme.

4.3. Impact assessment

The evaluation showed that SMART – i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound – objectives, indicators and targets should be developed, as almost all the programmes had very broad objectives which did not measure up well against the SMART yardstick. There were also shortcomings in indicators and targets.

The Commission acknowledges the need for proper monitoring of the LLP and its results in order to measure and assess its impact and has already taken action to develop an appropriate set of indicators to measure its impact.

4.4. Dissemination and exploitation of results

The evaluation called for improving dissemination and exploitation of good practice and also the sustainability and mainstreaming of outcomes at all levels of the programmes and by all involved. Projects should allocate specific resources to dissemination and provide a sustainability plan. The Commission should facilitate sharing of good practice at EU level and provide guidance. National authorities should adopt effective strategies to disseminate and apply results in their countries, ensure liaison between the results of the Lifelong Learning Programme and national policies and monitor its potential to move the EU agenda forward.

The LLP already sets specific objectives to encourage optimum use of the results and exchange good practice in order to improve the quality of education and training. A specific key activity on policy development has also been included in the transversal programme.

LLP national agencies are required by contract to undertake communication and dissemination activities. European Prizes for Lifelong Learning are awarded for outstanding schemes. Brochures describing “European success stories” present good practice showing potential for adaptation for further use.

Optimum use of results, products and processes is also encouraged and supported by a series of existing databases or platforms under development within the LLP and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation of the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and eLearning programmes shows that they have had a significant impact on education and training in the EU, both quantitative and qualitative. This can be seen at individual, institutional and policy-making levels.

At individual level, a positive impact was observed on both staff and learners who broadened their skills (including language proficiency), deepened their knowledge, developed a strong sense of networking across national boundaries and gained a stronger feeling of being European citizens. The mobility schemes, i.e. learning periods abroad, were the most successful in this respect.

Mobility schemes have not only enhanced individuals’ skills but also induced progress at institutional level. Erasmus in particular has embedded mobility in university life and led to structural changes and modernisation in higher education in Europe. As a result of various types of partnership and project, improvements in teaching, learning and management and structural changes in curricula or systems were also observed, in particular in the work environment of the participants and at local level. There is less evidence of a broader impact on national education systems and the countries participating failed to make sufficient strategic use of the outcomes of the programmes to adapt their systems.

At policy-making level, the impact of the Erasmus and Leonardo programmes is evident in the development of EU instruments to improve transparency and recognition of qualifications, in particular tools such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credits in Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). However, the impact of Comenius and Grundtvig remained more local.

Overall, the programmes clearly contributed to creating a European education area and embedded a culture of European cooperation amongst educational institutions.

The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) adopted for 2007-13 has learned lessons from its predecessors by building on their strengths on the one hand and trying to remedy the weaknesses detected on the other.

As an umbrella programme, it integrates action targeted on different groups in a coherent way, with simplified management procedures and streamlined sectoral sub-programmes, in order to harness synergies better.

The LLP is also designed to support more effectively the EU education and training policies set out in the Lisbon strategy and the Education and Training 2010 work programme. It does so not only under its sectoral strands on schools (Comenius), higher education (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo) and adult education (Grundtvig), but also under a new cross-cutting strand. The Commission has the flexibility to tailor the priorities of the annual LLP calls for proposals to current policy developments, such as the New Skills for New Jobs agenda or the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, both in 2009.

The Commission will continue to improve the common management system (LLP Link) and provide tools to consolidate data collection and impact assessment of the programme. Progress on the quality of outcomes, e.g. on mobility, and on implementation of the LLP objectives until 2013 will be closely monitored in cooperation with the countries represented on the single Programme Committee. Attention will also focus on better application and mainstreaming of the results of the LLP in order to support modernisation of education and training systems in Europe.

Annex: Output of the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and eLearning programmes – Key data on projects and participants

N.B.

Not all the programmes supported the same kinds of action. An empty cell means that this type of activity was not funded under the relevant programme.

The figures for Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci are for 2000-2006 and the figures for eLearning for 2004-2006. The figures mentioned in the report and this table have been updated in line with the latest statistics from the European Commission.

Output	Comenius (Socrates)	Grundtvig (Socrates)	Erasmus (Socrates)	Leonardo da Vinci	Arion ¹ (Socrates)	Lingua (Socrates)	Minerva (Socrates)	eLearning
Mobility								
Students/trainees			943 000 students in mobility schemes	174 937 trainees in initial VET 62 971 young workers 73 804 university students				
Staff/teachers/trainers/education specialists	56 329 (48 985 in training for teachers and 7 366 in training for future teachers)	5 500 adult education staff	135 208 university teachers	56 079 trainers in VET	13 500 education specialists and decision-makers on 1 300 Arion study visits			
Institutions involved/projects supported			2 523 with Erasmus University Charter	19 307 mobility projects (organising the above-mentioned mobility schemes)			78 preparatory visits	
Partnership projects	74 688 grants for schools	Approximately 20 000 grants awarded						eTwinning: 7 813 schools involved in a project; 23 812 schools registered for participation
Multilateral projects, networks and tools	434 (386 multilateral projects and 41 networks)	455 (417 projects and 37 networks)	520 curriculum development projects, 1 451 intensive programmes and 180 networks	2007 pilot projects for development of innovation in VET, including 78 networks, 74 reference material projects and 165 language projects		144 (66 on language learning and 78 on tools to improve access to language learning)	269 on open and distant learning and use of ICT in education	21 projects on virtual campuses, 25 projects on digital literacy and 16 projects on transversal actions

¹ Study visits for educational experts and decision-makers.